



SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

5550 S. Greenwood Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60637
smartmuseum.uchicago.edu



BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Three Decades of Contemporary
Chinese Art at the Smart

Smart Museum of Art announces contemporary Chinese art retrospective

Opens March 29 through July 5, 2026. Organized in collaboration with the Center for the Art of East Asia.

CHICAGO, IL — The Smart Museum of Art will present *Beyond Boundaries: Three Decades of Contemporary Chinese Art at the Smart* in collaboration with the **Center for the Art of East Asia**, on view from March 29 through July 5, 2026. This exhibition reflects on the enduring adaptability of contemporary art from China as it continues to grow within and beyond cultural and academic institutions.

Beyond Boundaries: Three Decades of Contemporary Chinese Art foregrounds the University of Chicago's pivotal role in studying and exhibiting contemporary Chinese art since the mid-1990s. In February 1999, Wu Hung, Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professor of Chinese Art History at the university, opened his first exhibition at the Smart Museum of Art. Entitled *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1999), the exhibition – and many more Wu curated in the ensuing years – was field-defining and forged new avenues for situating Chinese art within a broader global contemporary framework.

Taking these earlier exhibitions as points of departure, *Beyond Boundaries* brings together artworks acquired by the Museum over the last three decades, archival materials, ephemera, as well as new work. It explores how artists navigate and challenge physical limitations across cultural, environmental, and political terrains. Through strategies of fluidity, they confront dominant social expectations and political hegemonies – not only within a rapidly transforming China, but also amid broader global uncertainties. In doing so, *Beyond Boundaries* invites us to revisit fleeting moments, environments, and actions, and urges us to reconnect, return, and remember.

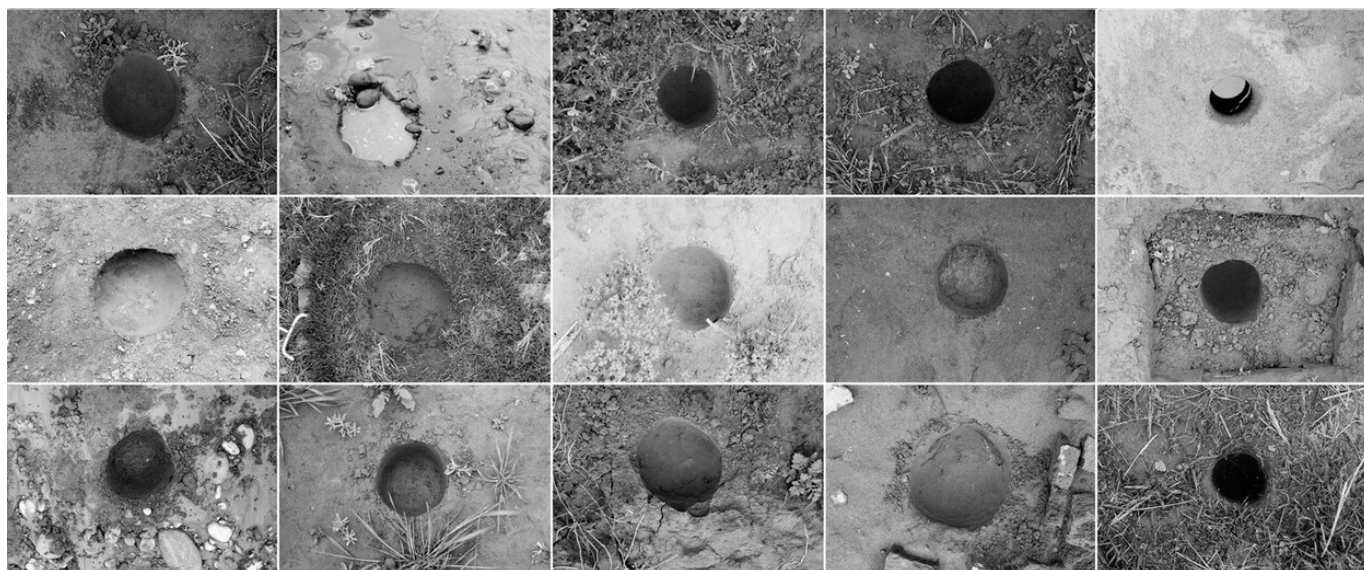
Beyond Boundaries: Three Decades of Contemporary Chinese Art at the Smart is organized in collaboration with the Center for the Art of East Asia (CAEA) under the leadership of Ellen Larson, CAEA Associate Director, and curatorial researchers Tianhe Chen, Peter Yuheng Deng, Dora Xintian Hou, and Wenshu Wang.

Support for the exhibition has been provided by the Markovitz Family Foundation for the Arts and Education. Additional support is provided by the Smart Museum's Board of Governors, and SmartPartners.

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About Center for the Art of East Asia

Established in 2003 by the Department of Art History and the Division of the Arts & Humanities, and directed by Wu Hung, the Center for the Art of East Asia (CAEA) at the University of Chicago has become an internationally renowned academic center dedicated to the study of East Asian art and its diasporas. Grounded in East Asia as a methodological starting point rather than a fixed boundary, CAEA advances a capacious vision of Asia that emphasizes transregional exchanges, diasporic formations, and shifting geographies that transcend traditional definitions. CAEA encourages new perspectives and approaches to research and collaboration by spearheading publications, symposia, workshops, and exhibitions.

caea.uchicago.edu

About the Smart Museum of Art

The Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming. Admission is always free.

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IMAGE CREDITS

Wang Wei, *1/30th of a Second Underwater*, 1999, chromogenic transparencies on translucent polyester base. Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Purchase, Gift of Carl Rungius, by exchange, 2001.121d © Wang Wei

Zhuang Hui, *Longitude 109.88 Latitude 31.09*, 1996, 2008, black and white photographs. Wu Hung Collection.